

30 May 2022

Ms Judi Zielke PSM,

CEO, Australian Research Council

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Dear Ms Zielke

Industry Fellowships Schemes

Research Australia is concerned about the Industry Fellowship Schemes and their applicability to Medical Products, one of the strategic target areas they are meant to address.

Research Australia has been pleased to be involved in the consultation process on the guidelines for the Industry Fellowships.

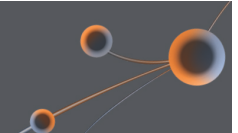
We first raised our concerns about the applicability of the Industry Fellowships and the application of the medical research policy with the ARC in a videoconference on 24 February. The response we received at the time was that the ARC did not expect the medical research policy would prevent successful Fellowship applications in respect of Medical products because the Industrial Transformation research program had successfully funded projects in the Medical Products area. The same response has been provided when this concern was raised in the first workshop on 18 March, and it was not included as an issue to be addressed in the summary following the meeting. It was also not addressed in any substantive way in the second roundtable on 29 April.

The ITRP is different

Research Australia believes this remains a significant issue because of the differences between the ITRP and Fellowship Schemes.

The ITRP is about developing industrial capacity. While several ITRP projects were funded in the Medical Products space, the research and technology that were the subject of the projects were in areas that improved the manufacturing process, rather than directly in a medical product.

For example, *'The ARC Hub for Digital Bioprocess Development aims to assist the Biopharma industry by increasing digital innovation, productivity and competitiveness. An interdisciplinary team of engineers, scientists and computing specialists will **develop digitally integrated advanced manufacturing processes** and a platform for industry adoption. The program will address key bioprocessing research challenges and **develop***



new process and digital models that can predict and optimise manufacturing processes, resulting in greater yields, faster and more flexible processes and enhanced product stability. (2021 Round 1, Project ID IH210100051) The focus is very clearly on manufacturing processes for medical products rather than a medical product itself.

Similarly, the ARC Research Hub For Connected Sensors For Health ‘aims to develop, manufacture and deploy *high-tech, cyber-secure, medically-certified IoT sensors to global health markets by integrating disparate Australian capabilities into a productive end-to-end value chain.* This Hub expects to position Australia at the forefront of connected health by integrating sensor science with cyber-secure data analytics, regulatory approval and certified manufacturing capabilities.’ (2021 Round 1, Project ID IH210100040) The focus of this project is on IoT sensors as a component, and on developing the value chain, rather than on a medical product as such.

Industry Fellowships and commercialisation skills

By contrast, the Industry Fellowships are designed to develop translation and/or commercialisation skills in the Fellows while working on research into industry identified problems. (Roundtable 2, 29 April, Pre-reading materials).

The emphasis on developing commercialisation and translation skills implies the research will be in relation to a product (commercial or otherwise) rather than into a manufacturing process etc. On this basis, in the Medical Products sector, the research proposed is much more likely to fall within the scope of ‘medical and health research’ as defined by the ARC’s Medical Research Policy, and therefore be ineligible for funding.

Research Australia believes that the ARC Industry Fellowship Scheme is at risk of failing to meet its objective of supporting the strategic area of Medical Products unless some form of exemption from, or relaxation of the ARC’s Medical Research Policy is applied to the Industry Fellowships.

We would welcome the opportunity to explore this issue further, including potential applications you believe could succeed in Medical Products, and possible solutions to improve the likelihood of successful applications in the Medical Products area.

Your sincerely



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